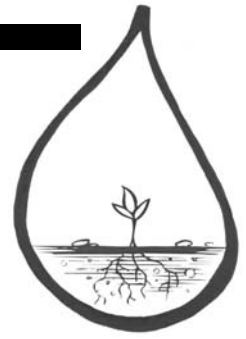
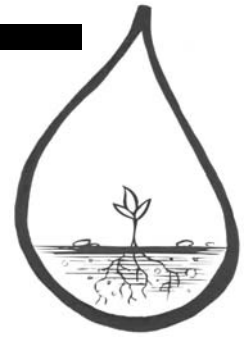

Building Environmental Youth Leadership
A High-School Service-learning Curriculum



Project Planning and Processes

Building Environmental Youth Leadership

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Introduction

Background

The Environmental Youth Leadership project was made possible in-part through funding from Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program. Over the course of two years, educators from the University of Minnesota Extension Service worked in collaboration with staff from the Northern Pines Girl Scout Council and Duluth ISD 709 to engage high school students in model service-learning projects. Students in these groups learned the foundations of good leadership through discussion, reflection, team and mission building. They selected and completed environmental restoration projects within the St. Louis River estuary in northern Minnesota. In programs ranging a few weeks to three months, groups successfully tackled the following projects:

- Miles of beach cleanup on Minnesota Point
- Removal of litter from the St. Louis River shoreline
- Planting of 300 saplings to control St. Louis River shoreline erosion
- Construction of 10 herbivory exclosures to protect cedar saplings on Grassy Point
- Insect control of exotic purple loosestrife in riverine wetlands
- Removal of shoreline exotic buckthorn

In hopes of extending the Environmental Youth Leadership program, lessons planned and insights gained from the model process have been compiled in the following curriculum guide. **The first part of the guide defines and details**

key components of the service-learning process. Narrative lesson plans focused on team/mission building and action planning comprise part two. When combined with existing studies or additional curricula, these provide teachers, youth leaders and families an effective means of cultivating environmental service. Best of luck!

What is Environmental Service-learning?

The Alliance for Service-Learning in Education provides a ubiquitous definition: "a method of teaching through which people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences."¹ According to the Search Institute, there are two basic components to service-learning:

- "**Service**—Young people engage in activities that meet the needs of others and the community...."
- "**Learning**—The experiences of serving others are used as an opportunity for self-reflection and learning."²

While this approach to education may be employed to various ends, Beery describes **environmental service-learning** as "deliberate community service actions, or projects, designed to maintain, protect and/or restore the health of the environment."³ These projects encourage development of

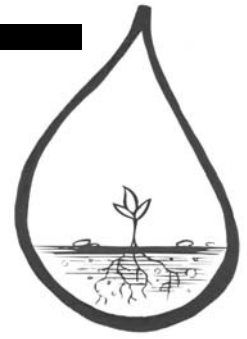
¹ Alliance for Service-Learning in Education (1995). Standards of Quality for School-Based and Community-Based Service Learning. Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.servicelearning.org.

² Search Institute. (2000). *An Asset Builder's Guide to Service-Learning*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.

³ Beery, T.H. (1993). *Environmental Service: A Partnership with Nature*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Duluth, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

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positive environmental values and responsibilities.

Moreover, student involvement in the planning process is preferable.

The Service-learning Process

The Environmental Youth Service process evolved from general service-learning guidelines. It includes important steps for both **project planning** and **implementation**:

When Planning a Project:

1. **Conduct a needs assessment.** Strive to identify projects that will satisfy community needs and meet education goals.
2. **Detail goals and objectives.** Define in measurable terms hours to be served, tasks to be completed, knowledge gained, values honed, etc.
3. **Plan for fun and fulfillment.** Plan ways for participants to benefit from and enjoy their contribution to the group and work.
4. **Identify collaborators and resources.** Identify experts, youth organizations, community service organizations, etc. who are interested in helping to achieve project goals. Seek physical resources like meeting space, transportation, and tools requisite to project completion.⁴

While these steps are distinct and necessary for effective service-learning, all are linked and should inform each other. For instance, project objectives may be framed, in part, based on motivations of collaborating organizations (e.g., merit badges, fair projects, or learning standards).

⁴ Adapted from:
Payne, D.A. (2000). *Evaluating Service-Learning Activities and Programs*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.



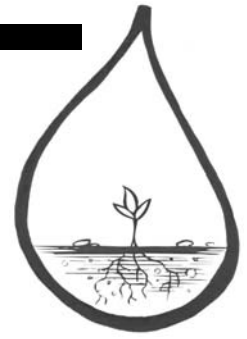
Figure 1. Four steps inherent to planning a service-project. Steps are related, informing each other.

When Implementing a Project:

1. **Encourage teamwork.** Engage students in activities that cultivate cooperation and group process skills.
2. **Build a focused mission.** Work with students to define a strong sense of purpose for the service project.
3. **Gather background knowledge.** Connect students with natural resource experts. Help them research the need and feasibility of potential environmental service projects.
4. **Develop a plan of action.** Once the group selects a project, engage students in development of a work plan and task lists that map its successful completion.

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5. **Complete the service project.**
Work as a group to achieve service goals.
6. **Celebrate the success.**
Commemorate and enjoy the lessons learned and community needs fulfilled.

Project implementation steps are not linear in fashion. Depending on group dynamics, students may begin with background research or a sense of mission before exploring teamwork skills. Once initiated, however, each task tends to continue for the duration of the project. For instance, groups will often engage in team-building activities throughout the service-learning experience. No matter the order, project implementation steps should be balanced and tailored to diminish group weaknesses and maximize achievements of project goals.

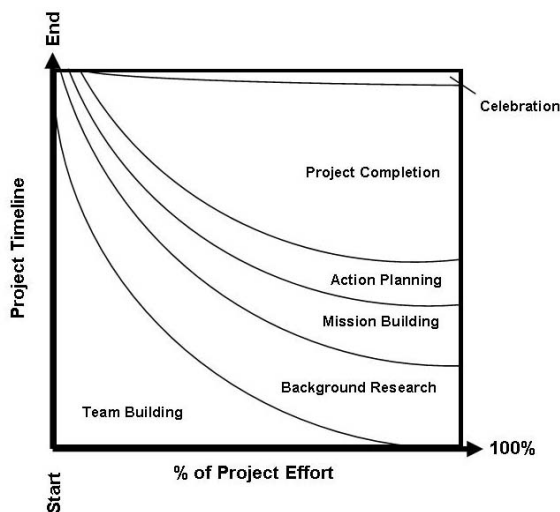


Figure 2. A graph comparing a potential project timeline with % effort dedicated to each of six implementation steps.

Keys to Success

Recruitment of Youth Groups

Recruitment of youth volunteers is requisite to the success of environmental service-learning projects, but it is not always easy. Youth inclined to sign on for these projects are often committed already to other clubs and activities. Participation in the service-learning project actually competes for their already overbooked time and attention. Thus, it is imperative to plan a project and activities that attract youth targeted for recruitment.

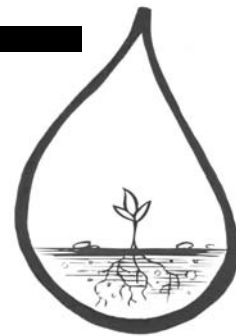
Over the course of the Environmental Youth Leadership project, the key factors to successful youth group recruitment proved to be **relevance**, **project detail**, and **integration within an existing group structure**. Foremost, adult leaders of these groups needed to know required time commitments for the project. They wanted description of tasks students would complete. Projects that meet established group requirements were more attractive to participation.

The recruitment process for the Environmental Youth Leadership project evolved through experience and benchmark assessments of other agencies.⁵ It consists of 8 steps described below:

⁵ Adapted in part from *8 Tips for Recruiting Youth to Serve in Intergenerational Programs*. Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.templecil.org. Also *Recruiting Youth to Your Mentoring Program*. Downloaded 7/12/06 from ctb.ku.edu.

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When Recruiting Youth

1. **Enlist Champions.** Find a small group of students who are eager to participate in an environmental service project. Invite them to be a steering committee, and involve them in planning and implementing the recruitment campaign. Encourage this group to refer others to the program.
2. **Identify a few short-term “entry” projects that will attract youth participation.** These projects provide the detail necessary for adult leaders and youth to assess attractiveness of participation. They provide a focus and goal for recruitment.
3. **Define the characteristics of youth who will participate in the project.** Based on the goals and requirements of the “entry” projects, draft youth volunteer “job descriptions”. At a minimum, these should include:
 - *Position title*
 - *Responsibilities*
 - *Time required*
 - *Skills required*See *Appendix B* in the back of this document for help. Use the descriptions to identify youth populations for recruitment.
4. **List Incentives.** Unfortunately, hard and sweaty work may not be enough to attract youth to the project. It is important to identify how it will be fun, interesting and worthwhile for target participants.
5. **Seek project partners.** Identify youth-serving organizations in the community that may be interested in participating in an environmental youth leadership program. Get to know their

programs and motivations to identify specific benefits of partnership, such as service hours or education standards. Contact education staff or volunteer leaders to discuss a program partnership.

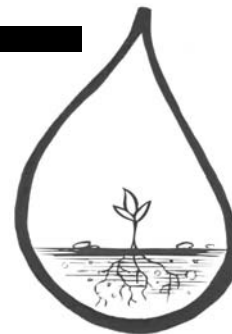
6. **Create a marketing plan.** Involve the steering committee and/or partners in designing messages and materials that will attract target populations. If possible, test these with youth and leaders outside the project. Identify where and when to post these materials and messages for maximum impact.
7. **Advertise the program.** Implement the marketing plan. Take plenty of pictures as the program progresses. Invite press and public to visit service projects and celebrations. Strive for brand-name recognition of the program among students in the community.
8. **Continue the process.** Due to constant turnover of students, recruitment is a constant effort for a long term program. Refresh membership of the steering committee from time to time. Seek new partners. Revise position descriptions and marketing plans as projects change. Keep advertising.

Motivating Existing Youth Groups

Youth-serving programs resident in communities across the United States encourage community service among participants. The following is a partial list of organizations with programs and requirements supportive of

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Environmental Youth Leadership activities:

4-H

Connection: Self-directed interest projects with a lot of latitude. Relevant areas include *Citizenship, Youth Leadership, Exploring the Environment, Forest Resources, Water/Wetlands, and Wildlife/Biology*. The *Youth Leadership* area is an especially solid connection.⁶

Contact: County 4-H Coordinator/Director or Regional Extension Educator.

Adjudicated Youth Programs

Connection: Community service is often a component of these programs.

Contact: Program directors or coordinators for program specific information.

After School Clubs/Programs

Connection: Key Clubs, National Honor Society and special interest clubs focused on environment, ecology, geography, and community service may commit to environmental service projects.

Contact: School counselors and teachers for existing programs and specifics.

Boy Scouts of America

Connection: Full or partial merit requirements for *Environmental Science, Soil and Water Conservation, and Fish and Wildlife Management* badges. Eagle Scout service project work is also a good fit.⁷

Contact: Local troop leaders or District Executive.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America

Connection: Teens in the youth directed *TEENSupreme® Keystone Clubs* select and tackle community service projects.

Contact: Area Boys and Girls Clubs.⁸

Camp Fire USA

Connection: Horizon-level children in local clubs identify and tackle service projects in their communities. The *Teens In Action* program focuses on youth directed service learning and leadership.

Contact: Council office.

Church Youth Group

Connection: Many church-affiliated youth groups commit to community service projects as a part of their programming.

Contact: Program directors or church clergy for information about specific programs.

Girl Scouts of the USA

Connection: Full or partial fulfillment of requirements for Studio 2B teen scout interest projects. Relevant topics include *Leadership, Build a Better Future, Eco-Action, From Shore to Sea, Planet Power, Plant Life, and Wildlife*. Each project requires completion of a service component.

Contact: Local troop leaders or the council office.⁹

Formal School Classes

Connection: Full or partial fulfillment of Science Standard—*III Earth and Space Science, A. Earth Structure and Processes*, and Social Studies Standards—*V Geography, D*.

⁶ Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.fourh.umn.edu.

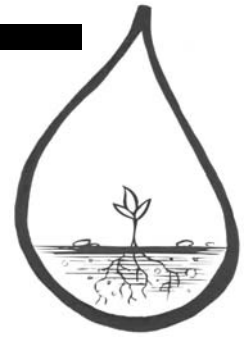
⁷ Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.meritbadge.com.

⁸ Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.bgca.org.

⁹ Downloaded 1/12/04 from www.girlscouts.org.

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Interconnections and E. Essential Skills. Standard completion will require teacher certification.

Contact: Science and social studies teachers or curriculum coordinators.

- Specific expectations for their help (i.e., are they expected to be present at work times, additional meetings, class visits?)

Project Partnerships

Akin to youth recruitment, securing a needs-based project usually also requires enrollment of natural resource professionals. Members of conservation groups or organizations like the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, these individuals are essential to project task planning, expert information, access, and ensuring that safety and permitting protocols are followed.

It is important to keep in mind that education is not a primary job responsibility for many of these people. They are busy fulfilling duties other than service-learning. Therefore, service projects that complete a part of their normal work duties will be more attractive than those which require additional efforts. When requesting help from natural resource professionals, be prepared to provide at least the following details:

- Goals and objectives of the project/program.
- Characteristics of students who will be involved.
- Tasks that can/can not be completed by students (i.e., can they use chainsaws or handsaws?)
- Amount of time that can be devoted to the project.

Project ideas and partnership with natural resource professionals can usually be secured through a short meeting or phone conversation. However, it may be helpful to use the following approach, especially when contacting people for the first time:

When Contacting Prospective Partners

1. Send a letter with details about the program and the request for help.
2. Schedule a meeting to discuss the proposal.
3. Meet with the individual. Be prepared to answer questions about the project and/or modify the plan to meet their needs.
4. Follow up by phone or a letter of thanks.¹⁰

Team-building Via Initiative Activities

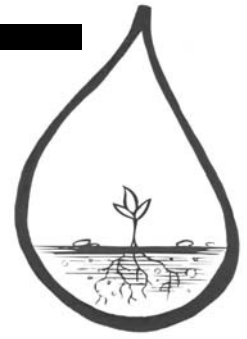
In the words of Sakofs and Armstrong, "Education has always drawn nourishment from experience."¹¹ Building a strong sense of teamwork through experiential initiative activities is one foundation of the Environmental Youth Leadership process. In the model programs, students, regardless of membership in existing groups, entered through participation in initiative

¹⁰ Dobbins, R. & Pitman, B. (n.d.) *Greenworks!* American Forest Foundation/Project Learning Tree. Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.plt.org/greenworks/.

¹¹ Sakofs, M. & Armstrong, G.P. (1996). *Into the Classroom: Outward Bound Resources for Teachers*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

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activities. Initiatives were bunched at the beginning and peppered throughout all successive meetings, allowing participants to develop and hone solid teamwork skills like leadership, communication, collaboration and trust. These skills fed directly into successful mission-building, action planning, and project completion.

Rager (2003) suggests that initiative activities provide an appropriate foundation for environmental service learning because they:

- Bring people together
- Encourage interaction and dependence on group members
- Expose strengths and weaknesses of the group for examination
- Necessitate cooperation and communication.¹²

They are readily available from many sources (see the end of this section for a partial list), and can usually be facilitated by a group leader. However, it is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure the safety of all participants. The following safety guidelines should be observed during all initiative activities:

Activity Safety Guidelines

1. Have a risk management plan.

Ensure that all leaders know how to respond to first-aid emergencies, foul weather, etc. It is recommended that someone leading the group have at least basic first aid certification. See *Appendicies C & D* for help.

- 2. Set clear safety guidelines for all activities.** These should be non-negotiable boundaries and practices that minimize the chance of injury.
- 3. Stress safety with participants.** Make sure that group members are aware that safety is a priority. Discuss safety guidelines and the risk management plan before starting activities. Immediately point out and correct unsafe behavior.
- 4. Make sure that activities are appropriate for the group skill level.** Some activities like trust falls require more physical stamina and close contact than others. These may be inappropriate for some groups.
- 5. Students should spot each other during activities.** Any group member involved in an activity should be spotted by non-participating peers.

The facilitator is also responsible for integrating four basic elements into the initiative team-building program:

Fun

Supplies the internal motivation to engage in initiative activities. If it is not enjoyable, students will be less apt to try their best.

How To: Model playfulness during activities. Inject humor into discussions. Watch for and point out students enjoying the activities.

Communication

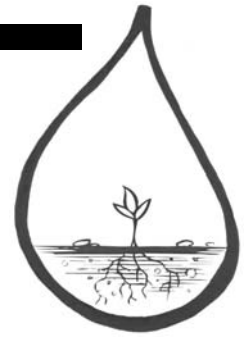
Means by which group members share thoughts, feelings, insights, and solutions. Communication keeps problems from arising.

How to: Encourage group discussion and planning before beginning the

¹² Rager, A. (2003). Initiative Activities. *Minnesota 4-H Camp Counselor Handbook*. Ed. Minnesota 4-H Camping Project Development Committee. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Extension Service.

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initiative. Listen to what they say, and press for further detail. Ask individuals to express their opinions about group plans.

Cooperation

Group members collaborate to solve problems. Whole group success is inherent to the structure of initiative activities.

How to: Structure activities to challenge group rather than individual success. Seek and applaud examples of cooperation. Celebrate successes as a group.

Trust

Allows participants to work in close contact with each other, sharing thoughts and feelings without fear of reprisal.

How to: model openness, sensitivity, safety. Encourage, but do not push, input from all group members. Always monitor levels of trust.¹³

No single initiative activity is sufficient to cover all of the key components. It is important to group activities that appropriately span this spectrum. Moreover, it is often helpful to begin with activities that highlight fun, followed by communication, cooperation, and finally trust. This is because trust may develop through and usually requires successful communication and cooperation.

Facilitators should commit plenty of time to forethought and planning prior to beginning an initiative team-building program. A model planning process follows:

When Planning an Initiative Program:

1. **Detail goals and objectives for the team.** Identify areas where the group needs work. Align these work areas with the four initiative elements.
2. **Assess site characteristics and resources.** Figure out resources available and where to do the activities. Compile safety plans, etc based on these.
3. **Select a variety of initiative activities that are appropriate for your goals, site and audience.** Integrate each of the four key components while focusing on work areas. Include activities that are both mentally and physically challenging. Consult multiple sources for activities.
4. **Pre-plan activity facilitation.** Consider how to introduce the activity—stories, metaphors, inspirational quotes, focusing questions, etc. Detail information that should be included in activity briefings like safety boundaries. Plan ways of debriefing the activities.
5. **Begin the activity with a briefing.** This prepares participants for what they will be doing. The briefing should include instructions, non-negotiable safety information, group goal-setting and planning.
6. **Complete the activity.** The facilitator will usually step back and allow students to take over during this part of the process. However, it is important to step in and correct any safety concerns.
7. **Debrief the activity.** Prompt group members to reflect on the

¹³ Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

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activity. What did they learn about team communication, cooperation, trust? What made the activity fun? Encourage students to apply lessons learned to their service learning project.

- 8. Celebrate successes.** Even when the group appears to fail an initiative, applaud the effort and partial success. Include everyone in the festivities.
- 9. Revisit lessons learned.** Do not let students forget the initiative experience. From time to time, discuss the experiences again. Look for opportunities during the service project to apply lessons learned.¹⁴

Briefing and Debriefing Initiative Activities

Without proper briefing and debriefing, initiative activities will likely result in nothing but challenging play. Teamwork skills and lessons learned result from group reflection before, during and after the activity. There are a number of considerations and questions that help facilitators successfully brief and debrief groups:

Methods for briefing and debriefing

- Small or large group discussion (essential)
- Solitary reflection
- Answering questions
- Drawings
- Writing or journaling
- Models
- Interviewing other participants

¹⁴ Adapted from both: Rager, A. (2003).

Also Rohnke, K. (1989). *Cowtails and Cobras II: A Guide to Initiatives, Ropes Courses, & Adventure Curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

- Role playing
- Readings to spark discussion

When briefing participants

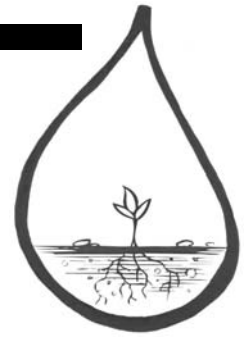
- Provide clear objectives, safety boundaries and time limits upfront.
- Intentionally leave activity instructions a bit fuzzy to leave group members room for interpretation and questioning.
- Encourage group members to follow the initiative-solving process:
STOP: Stop, Think, Observe surroundings and instructions, and Plan for success.
Ask them to explain each step of the process.
- Ask group members to set a learning goal for the activity. On which of the key components do they want to focus?
- Prompt the group to detail processes for working out the initiatives. How will they ensure everyone participates in planning? What process will they use to select a solution when many are offered?

When debriefing participants

- Debrief during and immediately after each activity. Also debrief after groups of activities that focus on any key component, and at the end of the program.
- Plan activities to leave adequate time for debriefing. Stick to the timeline.
- Impose a structure that ensures participation by all group members—raised hands, all individuals respond,

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- small group discussion with reports to the whole group, etc.
- Debrief all aspects of the experience—communication, judgment, appreciating self and others, respect, inclusion of all members, self-confidence, group decision-making, listening, personal feelings, etc.
- Ask application questions like:
How can we use this to achieve our service goals?
Provide examples of ways you will change your behavior toward the group in the future?
Based on this experience, Should the group do anything differently in the future?¹⁵

Sources for Initiative Activities and Process

The information included in this guide does not present a comprehensive coverage of team-building through initiative activities. Group leaders should have many questions and are encouraged to seek further information. There are many exemplary guides to initiative activities and processes. The following list are those consulted for the Environmental Youth Leadership project:

Christian, S.S., & Tubesing, N.L. (1997). *Instant Icebreakers*, Sandy Stewart Duluth, MN: Whole Person Associates Inc.

Kaagan, S.S. (1999). *Leadership Games: Experiential Learning for Organizational Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rager, A. (2003). Initiative Activities. *Minnesota 4-H Camp Counselor Handbook*. Ed. Minnesota 4-H Camping Project Development Committee. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

Rohnke, K. (1989). *Cowtails and Cobras II: A Guide to Initiatives, Ropes Courses, & Adventure Curriculum..* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

Sakofs, M. & Armstrong, G.P. (1996). *Into the Classroom: Outward Bound Resources for Teachers*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

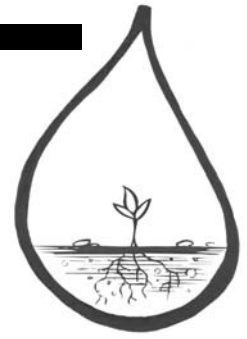
Team-building Via Outdoor Adventure

Outdoor adventures like camping, hiking, canoeing, and rock-climbing are also effective means of building team-building. Benefits, key components, and processes for facilitation are essentially identical to those described for initiative activities. But, team-building via outdoor adventure includes the added benefits of excitement and personal growth. For many students, an outdoor adventure will be a rare event, likely including exceptional challenges that test their conventional comforts. Group members must work together to help individuals surpass these challenges and reach personal successes.

¹⁵ Adapted from:
Rager, A. (2003).
Rohnke, K. (1989).
Also Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. (1996). *Initiative Games*. Unpublished lesson plan. Finland, MN: Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center.

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The rarity of outdoor adventures also adds a special attraction to group membership. In fact, short hikes, ropes course trips and other outings were employed as entry events in model Environmental Youth Leadership programs.

Because of the risks inherent to an adventure trip, however, **safe facilitation requires specialized training and experience**. Due to these concerns, a professional outfitter should be partnered or contracted to lead most outings. Use the following guidelines when sub-contracting a group:

- Meet with the outfitter. Ask staff to describe how their trips operate.
- Ask about their safe operating procedures. Ask to see risk management policies, emergency response plans, forms, etc.
- Ask about their staff qualification standards. How are they hired and trained? Can they effectively deal with an emergency?
- Discuss their experience in dealing with groups similar to yours. What special considerations do they identify? How will they handle these?
- Make sure that they are willing to hear and respond to safety and education concerns of their groups.
- Ask about their expectations of the participating group. How many chaperones are required? What items will they provide for participants (i.e., lifejackets, paddles,

backpacks, tents, etc.)? Will you be responsible for meal planning and preparation? Etc.

Permission and Preparation

In addition to working with trained specialists, group leaders should follow their organization's specific guidelines and timelines for securing transportation. Before departing on a trip, make sure that all participants also have a permission slip signed by a legal guardian. This form should conform to any safety needs expressed by trip outfitter. At least, it must:

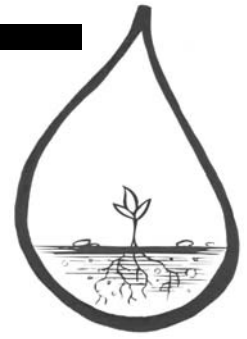
1. **Clearly communicate all risks associated with the activity.**
2. **Solicit any health conditions that might bar a participant from safely participating.**

Participants also need to dress for the weather forecasted on the trip dates. Prepare a packing list, including items to bring and those to leave at home. Cover trip specifics like where bathrooms and phones will be located, what the landscape will be like, what they will eat, etc. Make sure that all students have this information at least two-weeks prior to the trip. Pre-trip meetings are a good means of disseminating and discussing this information. Trip outfitters should be contacted 1-week prior to the arrival date to confirm procedures, times, concerns, etc.

Like initiative activities, the educational efficacy of these events depends on careful, complete and timely briefing and debriefing. Groups should follow the same processes described for initiative activities when discussing and reflecting on these outdoor adventures.

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Mission-building with Youth

Vision and mission statements provide an effective bridge between team-building, action planning and project work. They translate the personal "why am I here?" to a collective statement of purpose and service. The Environmental Youth Leadership model programs used mission and vision planning to engender long-term focus. In this way, the group's conviction and commitment remained focused from project to project and through shifting membership.

Effective mission-building includes three key components:

Shared Vision

Provides the "why" behind the mission statement. Peterson aptly explains: "Without a vision of what the future 'should be' it is hard to get motivated to do anything. If you have an idea of where you want to go or what you want to do it is much easier to motivate yourself and others."¹⁶ Experts from the University of Minnesota suggest that a good vision statement will meet the following criteria:

- Builds on the group purpose to provide an idea of who they want to become—their shared ideals.
- Provides clear images of what they plan to accomplish.¹⁷

Example: The Environmental Youth Leadership Team envisions a clean and healthy environment for our community.

¹⁶ Peterson, R.S. (1991). *Seeing the Vision*. Youth Leadership Workbook 5. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Extension Service.

¹⁷ Anderson, M., Anderson, S.R., Laeger-Hagemeister, M., Scheffert, D.R., & Steinberg, R. (1999). *Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals*. Facilitation Resources Volume 3. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Group Mission

Defines "how" the group will work toward achieving their vision. Paula Schneider defines a mission as "a written statement of purpose that can be used to initiate, evaluate, and refine all life activities."¹⁸ She suggests it serves as a "roadmap" guiding work decisions. University of Minnesota experts suggest an effective mission:

- Provides a clear and believable statement of team's unique goals or outcomes.
- Becomes the focus for developing and prioritizing team action plans.
- Show how the team serves their community.

Example: The high-school volunteers of the Environmental Youth Leadership Team commit to building a clean and healthy community through environmental restoration and protection.

Team Goals

Define "what" will be done to achieve the mission. Gary Stern explains: "It is important right up front to be as clear as possible about what you want to accomplish. Your goals tell you how you will measure success and focus your attention in order to achieve it."¹⁹

Effective goals should be SMART:

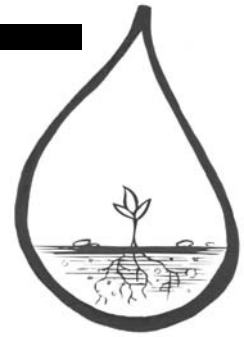
- **Specific.** Each goal should cover a single topic, and answer the 5 W's—who, what, when, where, why.
- **Measurable.** Each goal should include concrete criteria that can be tested for success.

¹⁸ Schneider, P. (n.d.) *Creating a Mission Statement*. Downloaded 12/20/03 from www.medceu.com.

¹⁹ Stern, G. J. (2001). *Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations*. Volume 1: Develop the Plan. Saint Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

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- **Attainable.** Plan goals that challenge but are achievable by the group.
- **Relevant.** Goals should arise from interests and convictions of group members, the mission and vision. However, each goal should also relate to other project goals.
- **Time-sensitive.** All goals should include a completion date.²⁰

Example: The Environmental Youth Leadership Team will clean 5 miles of beach during the summer of 2003 to relieve human pollution stress on the St. Louis River Estuary.

Ideally, groups work through the components in the order presented above. In model groups, however, this was often not the case. Because students usually signed on to participate in a planned “entry” project, the mission usually preceded their participation. Subsequently, group members were encouraged to work on project goal-setting and action planning at that time. Vision and mission-building activities were pursued after successful completion of the first project when the group began long-term planning. The following process summarizes the model group experience:

When Mission-Building

1. Work with partners and/or core-group of students to define a mission for an “entry” project.
2. As action planning begins for the project, introduce the project mission to the group and encourage them to set SMART goals.

3. Continuing action planning and service work, urge group members to consider and discuss the efficacy of their goals. Did they set a good standard? Was anything missed? Etc.
4. Throughout the progress of the “entry” project, ask group members to seek other possible projects. Encourage them to define what they want to get from the group. What should the group try to accomplish next? Ask them to record their results.
5. Shortly after completion of the “entry” project, convene a group meeting or two for future-planning. Use these meetings to create vision, mission, and goals statements.
6. Refer often to the group’s mission and vision. Group members should regularly discuss and revise goals.
7. Set a date, perhaps once each year, to reconvene for future planning. Group members should take this time to revise the vision and mission statements and set new goals.

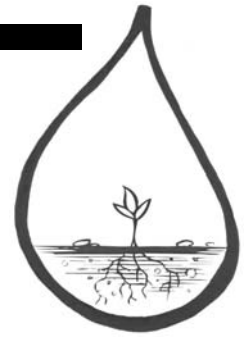
Sources for Mission-building Activities and Process

Although it may sound easy, mission-building is a multi-faceted and complex process. Professional consultants make their living helping businesses create effective mission statements. Therefore, the information included in this guide cannot present a comprehensive coverage of mission-building with youth. Group leaders should have many questions and are encouraged to seek further information. The following are

²⁰ Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.projects smart.co.uk.

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two sources that informed the model programs:

Kaagan, S.S. (1999). *Leadership Games: Experiential Learning for Organizational Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Peterson, R.S. (1991). *Seeing the Vision*. Youth Leadership Workbook 5. St. Paul: University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Program Evaluation—Getting Better All the Time

Evaluation is critical to effective planning and improvement of service-learning programs. When carefully implemented, it provides feedback essential to measuring the benefits and shortfalls of these programs, offering benchmarks from which enhancements can be made. Ideally, programs will be strategically evaluated and improved throughout the planning and program process.

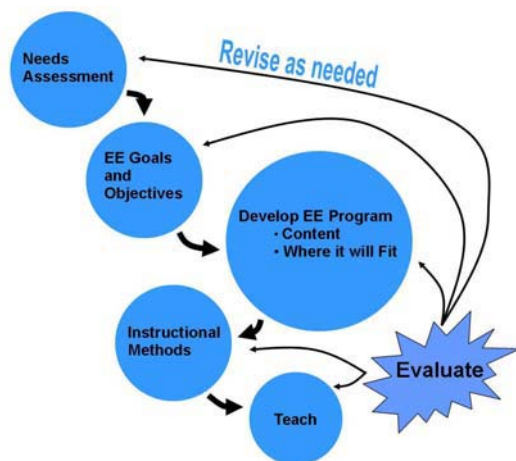


Figure 4. A representation of the curriculum planning process. Notice that evaluation occurs at each stage of the planning process.²¹

Youth members should reflect constantly on their project experience, personally evaluating lessons learned. Yet, numerous other contexts and data sources for evaluation are also inherent to service-learning projects. For instance, a Portland State University study offers methods for measuring program impacts on students, faculty, communities and the institutions affiliated with a service-learning experience.²² Groups may target evaluation of team-building or project components of a program. They may choose to collect data from team members, parents or teachers. Payne (2000) offers a matrix of service learning program components for evaluation:

Program Focus

- Academic learning goals
- Environmental service goals

Program Context

- Classroom
- Project location

He notes that we can collect evaluation data and/or evaluate how the project impacted a variety of people:

- Students
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Community Members

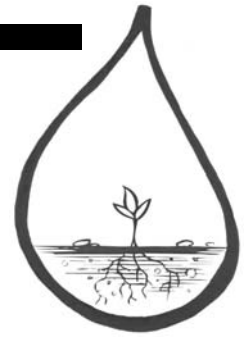
While a variety of program factors may be measured, evaluation does not have to be complex or overly time-consuming

²¹ Braus, J.A. & Wood, D. (1994). *Environmental Education in the Schools: Creating a Program that Works*. Troy, OH: North American Association for Environmental Education.

²² Driscoll, A., Gelmon, S.B., Holland, B.A., Kerrigan, S., Longley, M.J., & Spring, A. (1997). *Assessing the Impact of Service Learning: A Workbook of Strategies and Methods*. Portland, OR: Center for Academic Excellence, Portland State University.

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in order to be helpful. For instance, group members may circulate a list of team goals and potential projects to parents, partners and community members, asking them to identify the most fitting project. After completing a project, teams could gather for small group discussions about the benefits and shortfalls associated with certain aspects of their program. Journal entries or pictures are also good forms of evaluation information. But, effective program evaluation should meet the following criteria:

When Planning Evaluations

- The evaluation should be planned to target measurable objectives.
- Objectives should be feasible according to budgets and timelines.
- Data collected should be relevant to objectives.
- Evaluation plan should be flexible to changes in objectives, time lines and data sources.
- Evaluation methods must be replicable (i.e., by future group leaders). This begets more trustworthy results.
- All evaluation questions, methods and materials should be tested on target populations before using them.
- Data should be collected, interpreted and reported in an objective and timely fashion.
- Results should be reported to all parties affiliated with the project.²³

Ideally, students in the group should target, design and implement evaluation of the program. This encourages critical thinking about the program as well as developing practical skills. If possible, groups unfamiliar with program evaluation should seek professional help. Staff from local Universities and University Extension services may offer useful advice on evaluation design and questioning. There are also numerous internet and written guides to program evaluation. One particularly useful source is:

Payne, D.A. (2000). *Evaluating Service-Learning Activities and Programs*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Key Components in Service Learning with Youth

Youth Ownership—Youth Empowerment

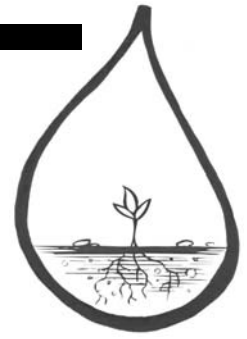
In a recent study of environmental service learning, Beth A. Covitt discerned differences in motive fulfillment—students' abilities to achieve their personal goals through service-learning—between youth-initiated and teacher-initiated service projects. Students in a pre-packaged teacher-initiated service project reported lower levels of motive fulfillment than their peers in projects with more youth governance. Based on these results, Covitt suggests that leaders planning service projects ask to what extent:

- Are students involved in choosing and planning their service-learning project?

²³ Adapted from Payne, D.A. (2000).

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- Is the service-learning work relevant to their lives?
- Does the project include meaningful work with adults and peers?²⁴

The bottom line is that service programs and projects that promote youth ownership and governance will likely have a greater impact on personal fulfillment and potentially behavior.

Background Research—A Foundation for Understanding

Developing an environmental knowledge base has long been held as one of the fundamental goals of effective environmental education. Engleson and Yockers suggest: “A knowledge base about how the natural environment functions is essential, for without such knowledge citizens cannot make wise decision about how to interact with the environment and how to prevent and resolve issues resulting from those interactions.” They define three types of knowledge:

- Knowledge of specifics like terms and facts.
- Knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics like classifications and methods.
- Knowledge of universals and abstractions in the field like theories and generalizations.²⁵

It is easy to infer that something of each knowledge type is required for students

²⁴ Covitt, B.A. (2002). *Motivating Environmentally Responsible Behavior through Service-Learning*. Paper presented to Corporation for National Service National Service Fellowship Program. Downloaded 7/12/06 from nationalserviceresources.org.

²⁵ Engleson, D.C., & Yockers, D.H. (1994). *A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Environmental Education*. Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

to effectively plan and complete their service learning projects. Background research—library and internet research, expert interview, experimentation, etc.—is the preferred vehicle for developing this knowledge-base because it maintains student control over the process. While exposure to background information in any form is a must, an ideal service learning program will motivate students to identify, pursue and answer their own questions for success.

In addition, the knowledge and research component of service learning programs often provide the obvious link to school standards. Madigan identified this link as a key strategy for program sustainability.²⁶ Leaders of formal school groups may pay special attention to background research.

Action Plan Development—Organization and Efficiency

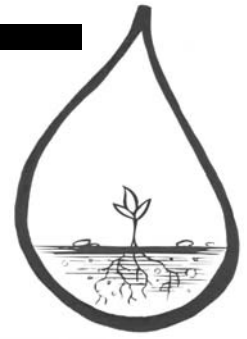
There may be no “I” in “Team”. However, there is an “I” in “Action”. Though fundamental to the long-term success of an Environmental Youth Leadership program, mission-building results in goals too broad for effective action. These provide no ownership and little direction for day to day service work. Successful completion of service projects requires groups to translate team goals into sub-goals or tasks. Task lists should include:

- Definition of single goal-subordinate actions.

²⁶ Madigan, P. (2000). *The Environmental Service-Learning Project: Are Environmental Education and Service-Learning a Natural Fit?* Paper presented to Corporation for National Service National Service Fellowship Program. Downloaded 7/12/06 from nationalserviceresources.org.

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- Names of group member(s) responsible for completing the task.
- Date when the task will be done.
- Priorities assigned for same date tasks.

Groups that pay careful consideration to outlining and assigning tasks required to reach their goals will be more orderly and efficient in completion of their projects. Moreover, the process of task-planning exposes students to valuable life skills—another benefit of service learning.

Risk Management Preparation— Keeping It Safe

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow, a sense of safety and security is fundamental to effective learning.²⁷ Because there is risk of injury inherent to many environmental service learning projects and team-building activities—slipping with a sharp tool, vehicle accident, overactive allergies, a bad fall, etc.—worried students may suffer psychological blocks to learning. To ensure a sound learning experience, therefore, group leaders must plan carefully to engender and maintain safety of the team.

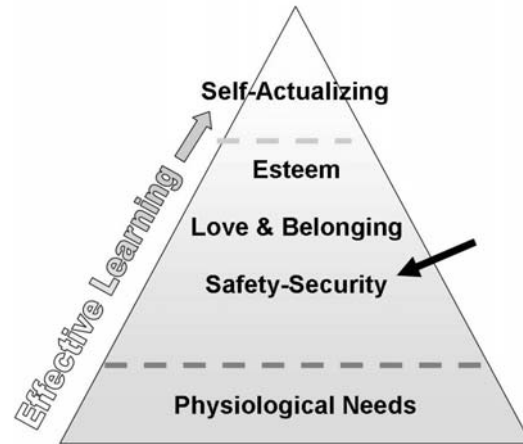


Figure 3. A graphic representation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Notice the importance of safety and security near the base of the triangle.

Risk management, or “a discipline for dealing with the possibility that some future event will cause harm”, provides group leaders a means of safety planning.²⁸ The management process forces assessment of:

- What can go wrong? What types of injuries are possible?
- What actions can leaders take to minimize these risks? Why will this work?
- Who is in charge of making sure the plan is carried out?

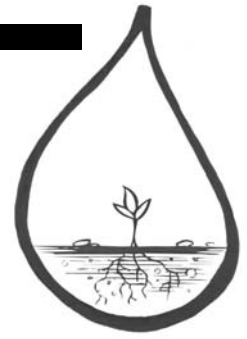
Due to the nature of activities associated with Environmental Youth Leadership programming, it is suggested that a person certified in Basic First Aid/CPR or higher is always present. Outdoor adventures or other activities with higher risks should be contracted through professionals. The bottom line: when in doubt, seek help. It only takes one accident to ruin a groups'

²⁷ Rutledge, A.J. (1985). Section two: A theory foundation. *A Visual Approach to Park Design*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

²⁸ Nonprofit Risk Management Center. (1999). *Risk Management Basics*. Downloaded 7/12/06 from www.eriskcenter.org.

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perception of safety. There is also a risk assessment/management form included at the end of this guide to aid safety planning.

Celebration—Acknowledging Real Work Done Well

In the midst and focus of hard work associated with an environmental service project, it is easy to miss time for celebration. Yet, the Search Institute highlights the importance of this part of the process: “Affirmation and celebration spotlight the positive things accomplished through service-learning and how participants have personally grown through the experience.” They offer a number of celebrations:

- Certificates of accomplishment for youth.
- Letters to the editor thanking group members and supporters for their work.
- Media coverage.
- Letters of thanks from community members.
- Public presentations hailing the success.
- Picnics, potlucks or other gatherings.²⁹

Inherent to vision and mission-building processes is a sense of working toward something better. Celebrations encourage students to declare progress toward these goals. Returning to Maslow’s Hierarchy, they build the esteem essential to self-actualization and learning.

Any celebration of service success is important. In fact, successful programs affirm even small successes like

completion of team-building challenges or task-lists throughout the project. Ideally, students should be involved in planning and implementing some celebrations. However, the unsought accolades of group leaders and community members are truly beneficial.

Presenting Youth Work—Finding a Wider Audience

The value of public presentation as celebration cannot be underestimated. These provide group members a forum in which to illustrate and proclaim their success. Smiles and applause from the audience also bolster self-esteem. Moreover, preparing for the presentation and answering audience questions challenge students to reflect and learn from the project.

Public presentations are also effective marketing vehicles. They provide an obvious gathering site for media. The publicity and accolades generated by presentations may also attract more students to the programs. These individuals aspire to the success and experiences described by their peers.

Good Luck building Environmental Youth Leadership!

²⁹ Search Institute. (2000). *An Asset Builder’s Guide to Service-Learning*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.